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ABSTRACT

Television production is a complicated task. It requires advanced technical skills and abilities, as well as tremendous creative input. It requires an outlying of time by an individual to learn the skills and implement the creative ideas he or she might have for a television show. A study examined the perceptions of 30 students who were highly involved in creating student television programming at Pepperdine University. The students interviewed were not receiving scholarship funding, work study, or class credit for their production work. The study sought to determine what motivates these students to devote so much time and energy to producing television shows without visible rewards, by analyzing their perceptions regarding their efforts. The study employed a qualitative methodology, analyzing in-depth interview responses to develop perception "themes." In addition, in-studio participant observation data was collected using field notes. Results reaffirm previous research that indicates "play" is a medium perceived by students for learning production skills. In addition, the perception of learning is enhanced by student productions that exhibit qualities of flow experience. Therefore, the challenge for any academic instructor is to integrate experiences that can cause discoveries to be made by the student. This is not to say that conventional teaching methods should not be used but that they should be integrated with new experience-oriented approaches. (Contains 72 references.) (Author/TB)

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Student Produced Television Programs:

The Relationship of Play Theory,

Flow Experiences, and Experiential Learning

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Running Head: PLAY THEORY, FLOW EXPERIENCES, AND LEARNING

Abstract

Television production is a complicated task. It requires advanced technical skills and abilities, as well as tremendous creative input. This requires an outlying of time by an individual in order to learn the skills and implement the creative ideas he or she might have for a television show.

This study examines the perceptions of thirty college students who were highly involved in creating student television programming at Pepperdine University. The students interviewed were not receiving scholarship funding, work study, or class credit for their production work. The study sought to determine what motivates these students to devote so much time and energy to producing television shows without visible rewards, by analyzing their perceptions regarding their efforts.

The study employed a qualitative methodology, analyzing in-depth interview responses to develop perception "themes". In addition, in-studio participant observation data was collected using field notes.

The study reaffirms previous research that indicates "play" is a medium perceived by students for learning production skills. In addition, the perception of learning is enhanced by student productions that exhibit qualities of flow experience.

Student Produced Television Programs: The Relationship of Play Theory,

Flow Experiences and Experiential Learning

Introduction

Television is a powerful media and the main source of information and entertainment for most people. Himmelstein notes that it is the dominant link to 99 percent of American households (1981 p. 171). Thus, television is the principle means by which Americans keep in touch with national life. This has reached the point where Hollow and Murray (1979, p. 163) report that the average American will eventually spend nine years watching television. Therefore, no other form of the popular arts exceeds television and only sleeping involves more of a person's time.

Historically, communication scholars have focused their efforts upon such topics as audience effects, the impact of the medium upon politics and governmental systems, program content and analysis, FCC regulation, and research into improvement of the technology itself. Though as early as 1978 Comstock, Chaffee, Katzman, & McCombs called for an impressive agenda of additional television studies in such areas as socialization, politics, special populations, psychological and behavioral effects, uses and gratifications, analysis and monitoring of content, operation and management, comparative media systems, and television and society, their agenda for future research did not call for a critical look at programmers themselves. Most importantly, there is currently no concentrated effort for studying the beginning place for many people in the broadcasting industry: the college television station. Further, there has been little, if any, communication research specifically designed to explain the collective action of a group of people who are motivated only by their desire to broadcast a television show.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The current emphasis of researchers, on areas in broadcasting other than student programming, has left a void in understanding why students produce programs. Thus, this study was designed to investigate the conditions that motivate and affect student programming. Obviously, a critical part of this study is the approach taken to understand what factors are involved in students' lives and their involvement in broadcasting.

Current Research Activity

In charting adolescent life, it is imperative to hold in high regard the factor of intrinsic motivation. Hilgard, (1980) views intrinsic motivation or "will" or conation as a sorely neglected field of study. This is unfortunate because it is a direct reflection of what a person actually wants to do the activity they are involved in.

This investigation will focus on the process of experience of intrinsic motivation. This approach receives strong support from Mihaly Csikzentmihalyi who has studied intrinsic motivation for many years and focuses particularly on "psychic negentrophy." (Csikzentmihalyi & Larson 1984) This state of consciousness involves (1) intrinsic motivation, (2) psychological activation, (3) effective concentration, (4) and positive feelings. In conjunction, these activities create a system that Csikszentmihalyi (1984) terms "flow experience." Flow experience is important because it is an individual's perception that there is something he or she can do and in fact is capable of doing it (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 30).

The major parameters of flow experience are skill and challenges. Csikszentmihalyi (1984, p. 265) states, "flow is experienced when personal skills match situational challenges." Thus, a person enjoys and learns whenever they feel that their capacity to act matches the challenge of a given situation.

Csikszentmihalyi (1984) contends that everyday experience does not normally allow for the spontaneous choice of stimulating challenges. Also, his research acknowledges that most educational institutions are unable to design programs that allow individual students to experience flow at their own level. James Coleman (1982) studies education and the approach of computers and technological change. Coleman identifies a reversal from traditional teaching through direct experience to one of vicarious experience. According to Coleman's theories, students search out activities that have the capability of producing flow experiences. Such activities allow for transformation in which the subject is carried away by their interaction with the activity. This immersion into the activity is such that there ceases to be a distinction between the person and the activity. This process of transformation is the fundamental principle of "play."

Thus, this study examines, through qualitative methodologies, the nature and function of "play" and "flow experience" in student television productions. The study is unique one in that the question of learning skills from such an activity has not been specifically explored. As mentioned, there is a lack of research into college student produced programming. This study allows for conclusions to be made on the perceptions of students toward motivation, learning attributes, and satisfaction with the activity. The goal is to see if there is a connection between "play" and flow theory and the learning of production skills.

Research Questions

This research project, examines the following research questions:

R1: Is play, as perceived by students working on television productions, perceived as a viable process for learning production skills?

R2: Do students perceive the occurrence of "flow experiences" during productions and, if so, do they believe it enhances their learning?

Operational Definitions

Of particular importance in this study is the definition of major concepts and terms to be used, especially those related to play and flow experiences. Spodek (et al., 1987) describes play according to the following criteria.

1. "Play" is motivated by satisfaction in the activity and not governed by basic need or social demands.
2. "Players" are concerned with the activity more than goals.
3. "Play" occurs with familiar objects or following the exploration of unfamiliar objects.
4. "Play" is free of outside rules or the rules can be modified by the players.
5. "Play" needs the active participation of the player.

The important components of "flow experience" are outlined by Csikszentmikhalyi (1984) as an activity that a person enjoys because of the balanced tension between challenges and skills. "Flow experience" activity has four main characteristics: (1) positive feelings toward self and others, (2) psychological activation, (3) intrinsic motivation; such that, the activity can exist independently from other goals or elements and (4) effective concentration, where the person is absorbed in the activity and can think about it clearly.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Play

Bowen and Mitchell state, "Play is universal" (Bowen & Mitchell, 1930, pp. 10). This statement has been recognized all over the world, as people of all ages involve themselves in activities and pursuits that bring enjoyable challenges to life. Ashby (1960) remarks that the propensity for play is the learning mechanism that individuals use to understand the unique and unpredictable elements in their existence

Unfortunately, play has been relegated to secondary status in western society. One of the reasons is due to the word itself. "Play" to most adults signifies an activity that is not serious. Our society's culture sets work ahead of play as the endeavor to be involved with in life. Thus, the word leads us away from the importance of the activity.

The other main reason that researchers have yet to fully explore the world of "play" is the activity was thought to affect only the formative years of young children. As such, it ceased to maintain an important role in a person's life after elementary school. Yawkey indicates that researchers are only now beginning to understand the contributions of imaginative "play" to learning and development (Yawkey, 1980). This may be viewed as bewildering because all age groups, from infants to adults, "play"--though the quality and quantity of their thinking during play differ (Ellis, 1973; Piaget, 1962). As Neumann (1971) aptly suggests, the power of "play" in the development of people of all ages is virtually an untapped reservoir.

Although research has been sporadic in the past, due to the connotations of the word "play", researchers are finding that "play" is a serious undertaking and not the opposite of work. Researchers such as Erickson (1963), Piaget (1962), Leiberman (1965), Nicholich (1975), and Yawkey (1978, 1979, 1980b) believe that "play" is closely related to the growth of thinking, communication abilities, social development and learning.

Play Theory

Theories on "play" have existed since the activity itself. Early philosophers were particularly impressed with the activity of "play". Plato (1952) viewed "play" as an opportunity for diverse concrete experiences which introduce a person to the nature and content of his environment and provide material for later thought.

The ideas concerning "play" continue to grow and manifest into different educational systems. Fredrick Froebel created kindergarten 150 years ago in response to his observations of

children's activities. The Montessori Method is a famous activity based on programs used in America for sixty years for educating children. Another prominent educator was Dewey who defined play as: "A name given to those activities which are not consciously performed for the sake of any result beyond themselves; these activities are enjoyable in their own execution without reference to any ulterior purpose (1913, p. 725)".

Process of play

Some very essential factors are observed when the process of play is studied. The main elements are changes in the thinking process and in social interactions of participants. These elements may be broken down into one important dimension: the dimension of transformation. As this dimension is concrete and observable, it has been used frequently to evaluation play activities and a person's actions in those activities.

Transformations can be simple or complex. However, the transformation involves some sort of role playing by the participant. Smilansky (1968) informs us to the nature of imaginative "play" in role playing as the opportunity to take on a role, by pretending to be somebody or something else. This action draws upon first, second hand experiences with others and results in the imitation in action and speech of the person or object while using real or imagined objects.

Vygotsky (1967) sees imaginative "play" as the tool for the separation of self from others and allows the participant to shift from an egocentric to a sociocentric perspective. Sutton-Smith (1971) have also proposed that the role playing action of play contributes to the development of abstract thinking. It is this ability to abstract thoughts that improve the cognitive processes necessary for one to take on the perspective of another individual.

Social Development

The role playing ability of imaginative play has led to further valuable contentions by researchers. What is more important is the ability of imaginative "play" to contribute to a

person's social development. Volpe (1976) views role playing as the basis for moral reasoning, altruism, and the basis of cooperation.

Perhaps, the most telling research insight available to us is Similiansky's (1968) study that contends imaginative "play" helps children acquire and understand social roles by allowing them the opportunity to "play" at life, and gather from that "play" a greater understanding of life. These individuals are better prepared and integrate into real life situations earlier than those who do not engage in role playing or imaginative "play". As the value of "play" extends to all ages, these statements hold tremendous value for the ability of anyone to improve their social skills.

The role playing function of imaginative play allo ws for transformation to occur in the behavior of a person. These transformations create new experiences that help to guide a person in relating to a new environment, to develop advanced abstract thinking, to improve social interaction, to transform egocentric behavior to sociocentric behavior and to learn.

Play and learning

The relationship of "play" to the cognitive development of an individual from a baby to adult life is still beyond our ability to understand. The activity of "play" in the ability of a person to learn language, morals, social skills, abstract thinking, sociocentric behavior has been a factor in many studies. In fact, the existence of "play" as a component in the development of any individual requires some aspect of the component to be investigated.

An early leader in the study of "play", Erickson (1963, p. 222) expounded upon the importance of play; "play is the human ability to deal with experience by creating model situations and to master reality by experiment and planning."

This finding has continued to have supporters. Simon and Smith (1985) have shown that "play" is an important vehicle for teaching problem solving skills. Pellegrini's (1981, 1984a) findings concur that "play" encourages cognitive flexibility that is paramount to learning. This is

corroborated by Luchins & Luchins (1968) and Wason & Johnson-Laird (1972), who have shown that it is the lack of flexibility which impedes problem solving in adults.

Creativity

While problem-solving is a valuable part of the learning process, it is the process of creativity that stands at the apex of man's problem-solving ability. Creative solutions are new not only to the individual but could be new to society itself. Lieberman (1965) has found a relationship between the quality of playfulness and certain measures of originality. Maier (1940) lists as one of the functions of "play" in problem-solving; play's ability to lead to discovery, or the generation of new problems. Maier calls this principle the "problem-solving" attitude. Also of importance, is the research of Mackworth (1965) who instructs that finding problems is more important than solving problems.

All of these research findings point to the value that "play" has regarding the ability of a person to test out and revise their ideas.. As a medium for expression, "play" functions as a tool for problem-solving and develops a person's ability to discover problems and be creative in solutions. It is a way of discovering the process of life. "Play", as Ellis suggests, is "preparation for the unknown" (Ellis, 1973, p. 120).

Technology and Play

Young adults in a technological society are faced with a bewildering variety of potential careers, lifestyles, life goals and values. These choices require learning technical skills that are not usually learned within the limits of the home environment. Indeed, some technical skills are achieved only within the limits and conventions of that particular skill's chosen role. In other words, the skill has to be experienced as the job, craft, or career position.

The importance of this approached was detailed in Burke (1978), Burke points out that there is a tremendous need to instruct students and design curriculum for actual positions.

However, though schools do not like to be known as a nuts and bolts teaching ground for broadcasting, Johnson suggests that it is difficult to give an individual specific training for a professional position (Johnson, 1980). This may be compounded when dealing with individuals who are unsure about the technical career positions they could succeed in.

Ellis views "play" as our major adaptive tool for dealing with the future. As Bateson (1956) study details, being able to manipulate reality in play allows us to grasp other realities

"Play" according to Bergen serves as a method for major advances in technological achievement, as seen in all the simulations the astronauts use to 'play through' a space flight (Bergen, 1988). Toffler (1980) reminds us that the technological advances that are occurring require a society that has citizens who are adaptive, creative, and possess complex cognitive and communication abilities. Yet, "play" is the medium for the human to deal with experience by creating model situation and to master reality by experiment and planning (Erickson, 1963). It is through "play" that we can learn about technology while we are learning about ourselves. This approach may let a person reframe and integrate the realities of "play" with those of work and then a person can experience the sensation of "flow" that comes from this experience (Csikszentmikhayli, 1979).

Flow Experience

It is the feeling of "flow" that opens this investigative approach to student programming According to Csikszentmikhayli (1984), "the best medium for growth in adolescence is a flow activity" (p. 260). Flow activities are described as leading to a state of psychic negentropy, a condition that has four main characteristics. The characteristics, according to Csikszentmihalyi, include: (1) positive feelings toward self and others; (2) psychological activation: a condition where action follows action and a person realizes a sense of energy and competence; (3) intrinsic motivation: such that the person identifies with the goal of the activity; and (4) effective

concentration: whereby a person is absorbed in the activity and can think about it clearly (Csikszentmihalyi, 1984, p. 24).

Of these four components, Csikszentmihalyi (1984, p. 49) identifies the central determinant as the extent that intrinsic motivation is present.

Intrinsic Motivation

Joseph Camellia (1951) postulates the idea that when a person acts on his internalized model of the world, they play. The motivation of "play" has been approached from two main perceptions. The motivational directions of the person and the motivational stimulus of the activity have been the approaches. In intrinsic motivation the person is self-motivated to engage in the activity, and secondly, the person is focused on the activity itself (Neumann, 1971). Perhaps the best way to understand the importance of intrinsic motivation as a primary force in play and learning is to view extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation deals with a goal that is irrelevant to the immediate task. In studies on extrinsic motivation (White, 1959; Lefcourt, 1966; Speeth, 1967; Minuchin, 1964; Coopersmith, 1967), extrinsic motivation seems to have an inhibitory and regressive effect on development and satisfaction, enjoyment, learning and other behavioral units. The main reason is due to the fact that the focus is on an extrinsic goal rather than on the activity itself. Therefore, Neumann describes that extrinsic motivation inhibits involvement in the task and self-direction in coping with the task (Neumann, 1971). Csikszentmihalyi states that activities that 'flow' occur in are "clearly structured activities in which the level of challenges and skills can be varied and controlled, such as ritual events, games, sports, or artistic performances" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, pp. 30-31). Therefore, Csikszentmihalyi explains that "optimal conditions for growth are present when a person experiences flow while doing things that are negetropic in the long run-for the self as well as the social system" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1984, p. 265)

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1984, p. 268), "when people enjoy an activity, it is because of this balanced tension between challenges and skills. If the challenges get to be too high, a person begins to doubt that they can make it, worry results and eventually turns into anxiety. If on the other hand, a person feels frustrated because there is no way to make use of his or her skills, then boredom follows. Boredom becomes extreme it yields to anxiety."

Of particular importance is the fact that enjoyment is never a stable state. For a person to continue in the flow channel, the person must attempt new challenges and their skills have to improve. Otherwise the activity breaks down into either a state of boredom or anxiety. Csikszentmihalyi states, "thus enjoyment is a built-in thermostat that indicates whether we are operating a full capacity, at the leading edge of growth" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1984, p. 269).

Experiential Learning

One of the challenges for any educational institution is to provide opportunities for 'flow experience' to help the growth needs of its students. College students recognize the skills and talents that they must acquire to succeed in the world. Therefore, there must be an effective way that the institution can provide students with the skills and talents they require. In fact, Thornburn stipulates that "the most difficult challenge for college to meet is student demand for field experiences" (Thornburn, 1979, p. 15).

Experiential programs vary in scope. Names, such as, internship, field study, field practicum, cooperative education, service learning, directed studies, and so on are examples of the abundance of experiential programs at universities. This type of education, according to Reinharz, is very beneficial in promoting motivation, personal growth, learning to apply theory to practical situations, gathering exposure to future careers, and learning specific career skills (Reinharz, 1979).

Experiential learning theory provides us with the necessary framework for understanding the learning process inherent in experiential programs. The theory, formulated by Kolb (1976b) depicts learning as a four-stage cycle. In the first stage of the cycle, the immediate concrete experience is the basis for observation and reflection. These observations and reflections, the second stage of the cycle, are assimilated into a concept or theory from which new implications can be deduced. The third stage involves testing the new concepts and leads the learner back to the realm of concrete experience. Little (1983, pp. 28-29) has researched student experiential learning environments and lists twelve important opportunities or values for the experience: (1) to integrate and evaluate a body of information via firsthand participation; (2) gain skills and values for a specific profession; (3) acquire the personal skills necessary for effective interpersonal interaction and adult life; (4) develop the ability to learn in a self-directed manner; (5) develop and use ethical situations; (6) test careers by exploration or confirmation of career choices by documented work experiences; (7) become responsible members of the community by developing social concerns and citizen participation roles; (8) have access to knowledge not always attained through classroom instruction; (9) learn to identify future problems for study in life. The final three can be added to the outcomes of experience-based learning depending upon the program environment: (10) providing service to the community and helping social problems, (11) earning money for living expenses or school, (12) having a stimulating and valid change of pace from classroom learning (Little, 1983, pp. 28-29).

Self-directed Learning

The purpose of learning is to enable us to understand our experiences and to use that knowledge to realize future goals in our lives. Knowles (1975, p. 18) describes self-directed learning as a "process in which individual's take the initiative without the help of others in

diagnosing their learning needs, formulating goals, identifying human and material resources and evaluating learning outcomes."

This process, however, should not be thought of as totally void of assistance. No act of learning may occur with the absence of external sources of assistance. Tough (1967, 1979) has repeatedly documented strong reliance on external sources, both human and material, in order for learning projects to be undertaken and points out that adults would rather have more than less assistance in their learning pursuits. Thus, the faculty approval of such activities and the support given in the form of expertise from faculty, materials, and studio equipment help fosters the environment necessary for self-directed learning in an experiential program.

College Television Instruction

Critical to our insight into the value of play and self directed learning is understanding why students see it as an second approach to developing production skills. The reason for students incorporating their own student produced shows on a voluntary basis stems from the process most universities use to instruct students in broadcasting.

Most college television production courses have two meetings per week for a fifteen week semester. The average class time is two hours. Burns (1986) states that the average production class size is between eight and fifteen students. This class size allows for enough students to fill the various crew positions in a television studio without having to many students with no involvement in the production. Whittaker (1993) details the teaching approach for an introduction to television production course as containing sixty percent lecture time, twenty percent competency and lab time, and twenty percent in class production time; and advanced television production course would consist of approximately fifty percent lecture time and fifty percent production work time. It is apparent that an introduction course would need more lecture time in order to teach the students the theory behind broadcast technology and programming.

This number of students and the amount of class time actually donated in most production courses to studio activities will not allow for multiple participation in every technical position during the course of a semester. Burns (1986) details the difficulties in teaching a production course that will allow a student to actually direct three 5 to 10 minute assignments during the course of the class. Thus, the task of adequately determining the role a student is challenged by or bored becomes difficult to assess by the student with so few opportunities.

In addition, the production activities are on the whole graded by the instructor of the course. Gross (1986) stipulates that advanced television production students are better graded on an work appraisal basis. A grading form is given to the students to illustrate what factors are being appraised by the instructor during student studio productions. Whittaker (1993) recommends grading student productions on the basis of the production ability to engage the audience. This approach lessens the amount of pressure on the student during the actual production itself and places emphasis on pre and post production abilities of the students in the class. Still, the production performance of the student is evaluated and this results in the student performing in an extrinsic motivational situation.

The standard procedure for labs, a situation where intrinsic motivation could occur, is to grade on attendance, attentiveness, and give a competency exam following the lab. Therefore, very few situations occur in a production courses as they are normally taught for intrinsic motivation to exist only for the student and allow for flow experience situations to exist for the class.

Limitations

There are inherent limitations in the study. One major limitation is that this study involves a case organization. Organizations are not homogeneous. They are composed of different people, different structures, and under the influence of different cultures. In this study

one organization has been analyzed. Thus, the findings of this study may not be generalized to the communication processes in other organizations.

As this study is based upon the perceptions of the students involved in the process, the study cannot unequivocally state that "play" and "flow experience" are directly responsible for learning production skills.

METHODOLOGY

Because of the need to investigate the motivation and learning parameters of students in the process of acquiring technical and creative broadcast programming skills, it was decided to utilize a case-study qualitative approach consisting of in-depth, open ended, audio-taped interviews, field notes, researcher immersion period, and participant observation.

Case Study

The television shows produced by students at Pepperdine University in the Stauffer Communications Building by student volunteer efforts served as the case study organizations for data collection in this research project.

Historical Background

Television programming started at Seaver College in 1977. Presently, Falcon Cable Service reaches approximately 12,000 homes in the towns of Malibu, as well as, parts of Agoura and Calabasas. The Board of Regents of Pepperdine University acting through the President of the University is the legal station owner and has the ultimate responsibility for the programming on TV3.

Television Programming

The programming at TV3 is varied in both content and format. Instructional programming is offered and consists of college credit course shows, Spanish and French language courses, and religious programs. In addition, P.B.S shows, such as Newton's Apple,

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are shown. Old movie classics that are public domain are regularly broadcast. Also, at several times during the year, the National Aeronautics and Space Association satellite feed is offered on TV3. Lastly, student produced and directed television shows that utilize student crews and talent are broadcast. Twelve such programs were produced during the research period.

Program Criteria

The nature of this study requires that the shows being studied meet the criteria for student productions. The factor of intrinsic motivation is important. Thus, to insure that this study considered only those shows that fit the criteria of volunteer student programming at TV3, students who had worked only on Telecommunication course projects or shows for academic credit were not included in this study. Similarly, no interviews were conducted with students who were working for pay in master control or equipment checkout. Care was also taken to interview the student directors, who receive a stipend for their work on the student news show, only about their work on their own uncompensated productions. These requirements insure that the criteria were maintained to study those students who simply and plainly "wish to be doing the activity" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1984, p. 49).

Sample

Thirty students were chosen to participate in qualitative interviews. The students were strategically chosen based on the following factors: (1) the amount of time or shows they were devoting their efforts to without any extrinsic rewards; (2) attempts were made to have an equal amount of technical crew and talent interviewed; (3) also an as equal dispersion of males and females as possible was goal-targeted, (4) as was an equal dispersion of collegiate years from freshman through senior a goal.

The sample included most students heavily involved in the production of student programming at Pepperdine University's TV3.

Personal Interviews

The personal interviews were conducted according to guidelines set forth by Taylor and Bogdan (1984). These guidelines are directed "toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words," (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 77). The interviews were conducted in an environment that was comfortable for the subject and guaranteed at least two hours for completion. Taylor & Bogdan, (1984, pp. 87-88) state that this length and the security of the environment allow the subject to speak freely. The questions for the interview were formulated by an experienced committee, based upon previous research studies and the needs and goals of this study. The questions were used to guide both the subject and the researcher during the course of the interview. The critical questions were open-ended during the interview to allow the subject to select from their whole range of experiences, emotions, and thoughts.

The interviews lasted from twenty minutes too almost two hours. The researcher followed Taylor & Bogdan's suggestion and used the 'questionnaire' as a guide to insure that the key areas were investigated with the subjects (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). If a subject responded with a notion that required further discourse, they were asked follow up and probe questions. After the interview, the researcher wrote down any particular observations observed during the interview. These notes included emerging themes arising out of the interview, important gestures made by the subject, nonverbal usage, and resulting interpretations. At the end of each interview, the subject was thanked for their time and cooperation with the study.

Participant Observation Field Notes

Field notes were kept during my period of participant observation. Bogdan (1972, p. 40) defines field notes as "the data of participant observation." The guidelines used for the field notes were established by Taylor & Bogdan (1972, pp. 59-60).

Data Analysis

As this was a multi-variable research project, the analysis of the data uses several techniques for proper collection and reduction of the data sets. Of paramount importance in this project was the identification of emergent themes that are based upon the in-depth interviews, participant observation period, and field notes. Therefore, vital to the analysis of this study is the process of continually analyzing the data as it was collected, and adjusting the collecting of the data to correspond to that analysis. Miles & Huberman (1984, pp. 21-22) give the components necessary for this process of ongoing analysis. The process consists of interrelating the activities of data collection, data display, data reduction and conclusion drawing and verification.

RESULTS

Research Question One

The first research question asked: "Is play, as perceived by students working on television productions, perceived as a viable process for learning production skills"?

Based upon the data, it is clear that students perceive play as a useful medium for learning production skills while participating on student productions. In all, nineteen themes emerged from the qualitative data set. Of these, eleven were most prominent. These included: "It's fun", "For me it's extracurricular", "Part of the team", "I think the fun changes", "The experience", "Run pretty much everything up there", "Learn more from doing it", "Actual TV station", "Lot of confidence", "Learning to work with others", and "Organizational". Since

research question number one dealt with two major categories, the category of play and the category of learning production skills, the analysis of the themes was done in those categories.

Our inquiry into the responses of the students showed a high perception of fun being involved in the activity of producing student television shows. This response was verified in every interview in some form, shape or manner. This included direct comments by the students stating that the activity was fun, the actions and activities that occurred during the productions themselves as witnessed by participant observation, and the animated behavior of the respondents during the interview sessions, and the use of specific jokes, funny incidents on the rundowns, computer graphics and other paraphernalia used during the course of a student show.

In particular, two other themes reinforced this fun component identified by the student respondents. One theme dealt with student programming being perceived as an extracurricular activity. This perception highlights the basic understanding that the student shows are not thought of as class assignments, or work, or requirements for graduation. Therefore, they are not extrinsic reward systems necessary for the students advancement in life. Therefore, they function as an intrinsic reward.

The second theme looked at the teamwork principle that was identified by many individuals as part of the reason there was so much fun on the shows. The ability to feel like being part of a good team was a fun feeling, and elicited many connections to games that brought fun into respondents lives. In addition, there was the perception that these teammates were friends, and you can have fun with friends.

Lastly, a third theme showed some components of the perception of fun changes with time. Most notably, the students notice that they are learning a lot. These coded themes were then shown to fulfill the important criteria established for determining if an activity is play. Criterion one requires that play is motivated by satisfaction in the activity and is not governed by

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either basic need or social demands. Criterion two requires players to be more concerned with the activity than goals. The themes, "It's Fun", "For me it's extracurricular", "Part of the team", and "I think the fun changes" all demonstrated compliance with criterion one and/or criterion two characteristics of play.

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Play as the Medium for Learning Production Skills

We have in the preceding themes identified that play is occurring during the taping of student produced programs at the Pepperdine Television station. All criteria for play were exposed in detailed analysis of both the interviews and participant observation findings.

The medium of play motivates the students in numerous ways. It motivates them creatively. It allows them to participate in an activity where they do not have to be concerned with extrinsic goals. It gives them the opportunity to use familiar equipment, and explore unfamiliar equipment. It is free from overt supervision, and the rules can be modified by the players. The activity needs active participation from everyone on the crew for the event to be as fun as possible. All of these items we have discussed in detail.

Now, that play has been established as a very viable component used by the students involved in student programming in our case organization, our focus shifts to the learning of production skills. The coded themes of "I think the fun changes", "The experience", "Run pretty much everything up there", "Learn more from doing it", and "Actual TV Station" hold the answer to whether or not the students perceived they learned production skills.

The theme, "I think the fun changes" reveals in clarity the understanding that the students know they are involved in a play activity and learning is occurring from it. Remember ST18's comments display this perception, "Wow, I've only been doing this for three weeks and it went from fun into a progression of I'm really learning something here." The major perception felt by the students is that they are learning "Experience". This experience is perceived as invaluable.

It's of vital importance to note that not one respondent reported that they did not learn a lot. They also felt that they learned a lot more than just productions skills. The attitude during the interviews was one of confidence in the learning they had achieved on their own or from their peers. This confidence came as result of their belief that you "Learn more from doing". This theme results from the above perception. The action of playing with the equipment or role playing over and over again instills the student with a lot of knowledge regarding the equipment. As ST2 simply said, "Being part of a show on a college station, you do everything. You pull wires, you do camera work, you do everything." The students perceive this process of doing everything as being as valuable as class work.

The theme "Learn more from doing it" lead right to another major theme, "Run pretty much everything up there". No respondent listed just one or two things they had learned. The case was when asked the respondents would usually identify only the equipment they had not gotten a firm educational grasp on yet. This was amazing to witness. The respondents always

let you know what they still want to play with and learn. It was the next experience they wished to gather, and it was because they felt very comfortable with the equipment they had already learned.

This comfort zone was due to the student's perception that the environment they were playing in was similar to television stations in the real world. It allowed for role playing to occur with little impedance. The students could role play easier as anchors when they are in a studio with real cameras, and teleprompters, and their own monitor in front of them. The theme "Actual TV Station" analyzed these perceptions, and gives us the insight necessary to understand the value placed on the learning the students felt they had gained. Most importantly, they felt they had learned true production skills. Thus, the medium of play is perceived by the students to allow the learning of production skills.

Other Perceived Benefits Learned

The responses here deal with the students' perceptions of learning other skills, other than, the specific acquisition of technical skills that we have already witnessed the students perceiving they had obtained. These responses are critical because they allow us to understand more fully how technical skills are acquired. Brian Sutton-Smith gives us this important insight, "Everyone agrees that there is a more positive effect associated with play. Consistently we should expect that player to become the more confident, optimistic kind of person" (1979, p. 317). So, the gaining of confidence and optimism that can occur during play helps create optimal conditions for learning and growth. This has been verified by Csikszentmihalyi (1979, p. 317) whose findings show, "where his subjects who flowed most, certainly found more work satisfaction and were enjoying their lives to a greater than usual extent."

Thus, it is necessary in this section to analyze the qualitative data for experiences that are negentropic in aspect, for the self as well as the social activity. As detailed, the acquisition of confidence and optimism is part of the accusation of technical skills also.

First it is very interesting to note that the respondents held very positive feelings toward benefits learned when participating on the shows. The general overall feeling expressed was that what was gained far exceeded any time or efforts expended on the shows, as described by ST14, "I never understood those people who went to school, got a degree in something and didn't want to work in it. To me it's like, I got a degree in TV production and I wanted to know more about TV production than what is in a textbook. And I enjoyed learning it. I love production. I really do. I mean it was something I didn't know I would like it until I did it, and the more I did it the more I enjoyed it."

So, seeing as how we left the last category looking at how the learning of technical skills aided in production classes, the best place to begin now is with the inquiry does this activity help in other aspects of their lives? In particular, are confidence and any other facets learned that would aid a student in acquiring production skills?

"So a lot of confidence followed"

The major feeling of the respondents was that the experiences gained from participating on the shows were invaluable and aided them tremendously in the classroom. While we have discussed the responses by students that the learning of production skills on their own on shows resulted in better performance in production courses, the focus here is on other benefits besides technical skills acquisition that the students perceived as beneficial.

We begin with ST3's thoughts, "You know, you learn concepts and you learn ways of doing things, but until you actually do it, it's hard in your mind's eye to mentally picture how its going to help you at all in your career. When, I came back to the classroom it really helped out

[to of worked on a show] and gave me a lot of confidence too. It made me realize, I can be doing these things. I'm going to be able to, you know, do whatever I want to do. Be it write, or produce or anchor or whatever. So a lot of confidence followed with it. Yeah!"

The same perception is registered by ST6, "It gives you more confidence, helps you work under pressure a little more, especially after putting shows together." This confidence is in fact recognized by students who are involved and their increased skill benefits. We look first as ST12's insight, "You know, actually, actually I did. When I was doing the show, I was taking a class called Organizational Behavior and I was the manager and everyone was set in a group and I was the manager of my particular group. Occasionally we worked on group projects where someone in the group would present them and they always elected myself or [another TV student] because of our background on TV3."

These responses indicate that the students perceive they have more confidence in themselves because of their involvement on the student shows. This confidence allowed the students to perceive themselves as having the ability as ST3 says, "I'm going to be able to, you know, do whatever I want to do." This would include learning production skills.

The next benefit perceived learned deals with the perception of gaining ability in working with others. This is important because it cannot be done with just one individual. Therefore, the activity requires a number of participants. Getting along with those participants is crucial in order for the activity to occur.

Research Question Two

Research Question number two asked, "Do students perceive the occurrence of "flow experiences" during productions and, if so, do they believe it enhances their learning? The results of the qualitative analysis indicates that students do indeed perceive that their learning of production techniques is enhanced flow experiences. An examination of the data set revealed

some nine themes which included: "It flowed and I felt good", "That's what makes a real good show", "And we were doing new stuff", "Too much added pressure", "The boring don't give me no experience", "Stress is good, stress makes things happen", "That is where I get all my energy", and "It's the combination of everything".

Data Display of "Flow Experience" on Students

The research findings in this study into the successful acquisition of production skills by students involved in 'flow experience' activities show that the student's social setting in the production adds a crucial condition for the experience of 'flow'.

A number of factors are present that facilitate the successful perception that 'flow' is occurring to the students. Although the identification of all the factors involved in television production that might help to create this perception was not an original research undertaking, one factor did emerge that deserves analysis. This factor is whether the student interviewed was responding from the point of view of a talent person involved in television production or a technical position person involved in television production.

The reason for this analysis is that there was a witnessable correlation in the responses from the talent category of students as well as from the production category of students. As mentioned earlier, the factor of whether a student was primarily talent oriented or technically oriented was not a viable component in the selection process. Also, every student interviewed had performed both in front of the camera and behind the camera in both categories. This is due to the nature of the environment at the student television station in that shows frequently need people to perform both roles at one time or another or students were allowed to try positions they were interested in learning. Therefore, the breakdown of the interviewees into the categories of talent and technical is done simply by the number of shows they performed that category versus the other category.

The responses from the category classified respondents' shows a further component of 'flow experience' perception that has not been fully explored yet in this study. This component is the feedback the student receives during the 'flow experience' moment itself. The correlation by category as it relates to the perception of feedback is displayed below:

Technical Versus Talent

learn skills a lot quicker	learn skills a bit slower
more advances than setbacks	setbacks and advances same
notice flow moment quickly	notice flow less quickly
less peer pressure	more peer pressure
more sources of information	less sources of information
mood is happier	mood is not as happy
optimistic about equipment	expect equipment to fail
technical positions allow for more instantaneous feedback to occur for the students and less delay in evaluation of progress	talent positions have fewer direct feedback opportunities and the evaluation of progress is frequently delayed

Technical versus Talent

The factors displayed above relate to students perceptions as recorded in their interviews. The perceptions correlate to the student's general task during the 'flow experience' moments of student productions. Each factor identified by the students will now be explained.

Technically oriented students perceived that they learned the skill necessary for the position they were involved in quicker than talent perceived they learned the same skills. Technical roles were perceived to give more advances in learning than setbacks were as talent roles resulted in about the same response toward setbacks and advances. Students involved in technical roles replied more often that they knew they were in the flow and were conscious of it.

Talent role students understood and felt moments of 'flow', but were not as conscious of it during the moment as they were afterwards. Technical roles were subject to less peer pressure from others, usually only the producer and director, than talent roles who felt that they had the entire student staff and an audience judging their performance. Technical role students received information automatically from the monitors, speakers, and from crew members in the control room regarding their activity. Talent had to focus on the teleprompter and usually only had a floor director for information on how they were doing. The camaraderie enjoyed by the control room and camera crew gave perceptions of creating happier moods than talent felt during a production. Talent usually had to function alone, writing stories, practicing their delivery, performing on camera. Talent role students frequently felt that some technical glitz would occur during their time on camera. Most talent role students had an experience where either the sound dropped out, or a computer graphic was put up over their face sometime during one of their performances. Technical role students enjoyed working with the equipment so they had a more favorable impression of it because they understood the equipment's capabilities.

The amount of feedback and the nature of the feedback accounts for the nature of the perceptions listed in the data display. Technical role students receive almost instantaneous feedback when performing a technical task. A sound board operator can see the VU meters and know that they are overmodulating the announcer's voice and that explains the reason for the muddy sound. A camera person witnesses instantaneous through their camera monitor whether or not their zoom in to talent is smooth or shaky. The technical director knows the moment they perform a hard take if it was the right source or not by the on air monitor in front of them. This ability to receive information back constantly while performing is conducive to creating a 'flow' experience event.

Students' performing in talent role positions do not have the option of hearing the broadcast sound and picture that is being created while they are participating on the student show. Therefore, they generally can rely only upon the feedback from others or themselves. Talent can normally tell when they have flubbed a word or a sentence of if they looked off camera during their delivery. Those types of mistakes they figure out for themselves. The main feedback problem with the position of talent is determining how well the performance is going. Here, talent usually requires the input from others in the studio. This might require the talent student asking the flow director how he/she is doing, or how the show is going, or is there any production problems. Trust in others becomes a factor in the evaluation process, and gives the talent person another condition to perform under this is no necessary for technical positions.

Talent frequently replied that they watched the recording of the show later to evaluate their performance and over time were able to relate that knowledge to what they were doing on camera and 'feel' if it was right or not. This learned 'camera' presence aided the talent people tremendously in lessening the stress of being on camera and contributed to their expansion of skill efforts while on camera. Thus, the quality of the 'flow' experienced by students participating on student produced shows is affected by whether or not the student is involved in a technically oriented event or a talent oriented event.

Discussion

Implications for Teaching

The focus of this thesis has been on the process of learning. Morris Keeton writes, "The very heart of learning is . . . a process in which unexpected things emerge. To define excellence in learning as having the most detailed syllabi describing how learning will occur and what will be learned is the very antithesis of what higher education should be" (1972, p. 147).

Therefore, the challenge for any academic instructor is to integrate experiences that can cause discoveries to be made by the student. So, it is important to understand that students can be so rewarded by their own field experience, and then to apply this knowledge to the more traditional modes of instruction in liberal arts colleges.

Csikszentmihalyi states, "It would mean that educators might stop worrying about how to transmit information, and concentrate instead on how to make learning more enjoyable, because only when going to school becomes a flow activity will students be motivated to learn on their own, and grow in the process. Otherwise, education becomes just another alienating experience that increase entropy in the present while offering the specious promise of increasing future negetropy" (1984, p. 259).

This approach does not mean that conventional teaching methods do not continue to have great value. One learns by reading books, hearing lectures, and writing papers. This important view of the liberal education is presented by Thornburn, "Most of the conventional assumptions about liberal learning and the nature of a liberal arts college continue to have great value . . . experiential learning does not contradict any of those assumptions; in fact, thoughtful analysis reveals that it actually reinforces them" (1979, p. 6).

The understanding is that the integration of a liberal education and experience is a beneficial arrangement. A liberal education passes on what is best in a culture up to now. This knowledge allows the student to use theoretical study and critical thought in developing insights. Smythe states, "Theoretical study and critical thought are essential as sources of form, structure, and discipline" (1979, p. 11). Thus, the class is just as necessary as the experience. Yet, a combination of the two can serve the student in advantageous ways.

One advantageous way is through scholastic achievement. Csikszentmihalyi studies have shown that, "The relationship between flow and grades does not simply mean that the

better students enjoy classes more. It means that regardless of a student's ability (GPA), the class he or she enjoys more is the one he or she will get the better grades in. In other words, the enjoyable course is the one in which the student will do best" (1984, p. 259).

All faculty members like to teach satisfied students. It helps morale, it sparks initiative on the part of the faculty member to see that students are prepared for graduation, and it is self-rewarding too. Flow in a classroom setting can bring external rewards not only to the students, but to the instructor. As we know, when a class is enjoyable, one learns more from it. Csikszentmihalyi identifies conditions necessary for this to occur, "To make education enjoyable (and hence growth-producing), two sets of conditions must obtain: The institution needs to present students with opportunities for action they can cope with, and increase these challenges as the individual skills of the learner develop; the teenager should be prepared to internalize the challenges presented by the institution, and have enough skills to begin acting in the school setting. If both these conditions are fulfilled, learning will take care of itself" (1984, p. 259).

Thus, the optimum conditions for teaching would be to incorporate both challenging actions that test the limits of one's skill and the knowledge of how to increase those challenges as the student's skills improve. These requirements cannot be met in full by the students themselves.

First, some guidance is necessary in order to establish challenges that can be reasonably met. Participant observation has shown that the number of shows that end up being performed is very small in comparison to the number of shows that are proposed for production every semester. Twenty-one shows proposals were submitted for the 1992 year and only five shows ended up being produced.

The main reason observed for the other students failure to produce these show proposals was the lack of skills required for producing a television program. The shows that

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went into production for the year or are recurring shows from previous years all have producers who had finished at least the first two courses in broadcast production, and had worked in various capacities on other shows for at least one year before attempting to start or produce their own show. The students understand that they must learn certain skills before they are ready to tackle the task of experiential learning through their own shows. This fact was brought clearly to light during a production meeting for the news show where four students commented on the situation where a student with no previous show experience was made a producer of a day of news. The comments by the students were as follows; "that will probably keep them from coming back next semester", "that is if they do not have a breakdown this term", "you know, we burn out more people by having them do stuff they don't know how to do, it's just too much work for them.", "yeah, I was burned out for a year after having to produce when I didn't know what the hell I was doing."

Another factor in the failure of a lot of shows to get off the ground is that the show proposals are not grounded on viable show ideas or feasible production values. The students that proposed these shows did not lack the energy, drive, or desire to see their show come to fruition. However, they did lack some basic understanding of how television programs are designed and structured. Most often, their ideas involved highly elaborate remote shooting sites that they did not realize would take a lot of production time to accomplish, as well as, a lot of post production work to edit together. This was especially detrimental when their editing skills were weak. Three separate shows were shot and never aired because the editing was never completed on the shows, or the students discovered they did not shoot the shows for editing.

This process of discovering the practical takes us back to Aristotle. Aristotle (1942) made a distinction between the practical and theoretical by stating the practical is concerned with action and the theoretical with knowledge. He also said there was a third realm, the productive.

The productive realm is concerned with making. The students participating in the process of creating television shows discover in the productive realm the practical applications of the skills they are learning and the theoretical wisdom for creating innovative programs.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to this study as with any research project. The main limitation was the fact that the study focused on the perceptions of students at only one case organization. The results therefore cannot be extended with full conviction to include other university television programs.

Another limitation was that the students were interviewed separately, and guaranteed anonymity. Obviously, the promise of anonymity was given to make the respondents feel comfortable and illicit truthful answers. This could only be done in a private interview session. So, some comparisons regarding 'flow experience' as a group phenomena could not be ascertained.

Furthermore, time limitations restricted the possibility of interviewing every single student who is involved in the process of student programming. The influx of persons every semester alone is incredible, and most of the shows have a new face on their crew about every other show taping. Thus, the study had to concern itself with those persons most involved over the course of their collegiate careers at the station.

Future Research

It is recommended that future qualitative research on student television production continue to focus on the programmers themselves as a collective group. Also, that more than one organization be included in the study to see if there are similarities or disparities between case organizations.

Although gender was not studied in this research project, it is recommended for future qualitative research that gender be a variable of study to see if gender is an emergent issue. Since there is a definite increase in the number of women entering the field of broadcasting, qualitative gender studies could result in other patterns of meaning being discovered regarding their assimilation of the process of broadcasting.

Another important variable that needs investigative research is the variable of crew position. Are there certain positions that inhibit or increase the student's overall experience and to what extent?

Lastly, analysis of procedures that students could use to produce programming that would increase the occurrence of "flow experience" on their shows. As the process of flow is deemed beneficial by the students, studies regarding ways they could better structure their efforts to produce the experience would be very beneficial for academic instructors to know.

Strengths of Study

The strengths of this study are many and varied. This study focused on an area that receives to little research. As Comstock, Chaffee, Katzman, McCombs, and Roberts (1978) described, the majority of research in the field of broadcast programming has focused on just four areas. These areas are effects of television upon an audience, the effects of the medium upon politics and governmental systems, the analysis of the programming broadcasted and FCC regulation, and research into the improvement of the technology. Unfortunately, these categories do not call for a critical look at programmers themselves. Our concern is that there has been no concentrated effort at studying the beginning place for a number of the people in the broadcasting industry, the college television station. This study is one of the few to do so.

Another strength to this study is that most research has tended to focus on one individual in the organization and not the collective group itself. For instance, Newcomb and Alley (1982)

looked at the ability of producers to instill a vision of quality programming for staff to follow, and Owens & Infante, (1988) documented the communication behavior of a director at a television station and its effect upon crew outcomes. No real body of research has been developed to explain the collective action of a group of people who are motivated only by their desire to broadcast a show. So, looking at the collective group of student programmers who are most involved in the process is a unique approach to a field that receives very little study at this moment.

Lastly, through the use of qualitative research methods, this study was able to show the diversity and complexity that exist in the perceptions of the student programmers. The themes generated by those students' perceptions give a fuller understanding to the exact process the students are undergoing while taping a show. The holistic overview allows for better integration of the data that was gathered. So, the addition of participant observation along with in depth interviews helped to create a study that did not rely solely on one methodology. Thus, watching the students engage in the role playing greatly enriched the data gathered in this study.

Hopefully, because this study is grounded in the experiences of student programmers, it provides numerous benefits for professors, instructors, students, and university administrations. For professors and instructors, the study provides valuable information regarding the learning process of students in broadcasting. For students, it provides a greater insight into methods for gaining experience, production skills, and quality experiences. For university administration, this research offers an analysis of a full rounded educational program that involves well designed outlets for students to explore their capabilities.

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